

# ASTU 204a

## Understanding Humans: An Integrated Approach

Winter 2009, Term 2

*Monday, 4-6:30*

*Buchanan B-211*

### Instructors

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### Goals of Course

How can we understand humans, our psychology, behavior, diversity, cultures, histories, institutions, arts, technologies, gods, and moral systems? People have been wondering about these questions for a long time and in the last few hundred years researchers at universities have considered it intensely. What are fruits of all these efforts? Have the humanities and social sciences converged on a unified approach to understanding humans? Are the views of decision-making psychologists about mind and motivation consistent with the position taken by economists, who advise our politicians and government organizations? Are the views that sociologists and anthropologists take regarding artistic production, music or ethnicity informed by findings in cognitive neuroscience or developmental psychology?

Faculty of Arts students rarely get an overview of the humanities as a whole, especially in a manner that questions some of the basic assumptions at work in most humanistic disciplines or that examines the basis of the humanities / natural science divide itself. This course is designed to give students a unique introduction to a new, vertically-integrated approach to the humanities that promises to transform the manner in which we think about human-level phenomena such as art, literature, ethics or politics. Goals include:

- introducing students to the diversity of approaches and interests in the Faculty of Arts by drawing on some of the best teacher-researchers in the Faculty;
- providing students with a critical perspective for assessing the assumptions and traditions within each discipline;
- suggesting a framework, based upon evolutionary theory, for unifying diverse efforts by different disciplines in a manner that will energize and interconnect different interests while avoiding crudely reducing them or ignoring defining aspects of human experience.

Approximately once a month the seminar meeting will be integrated with lectures in the Green College “Human Evolution, Cognition and Culture” series:

- January 18, Mark Johnson (U Oregon, Philosophy), “Bodily Sources of Mind, Thought, and Language”
- February 8, Ellen Dissanayake (U Washington, Art History), “The Artification Hypothesis”
- March 8, Mark Turner (Case Western, Cognitive Science), “The Embodied Mind and the Spark of Human Culture”
- March 31, Owen Flanagan (Duke, Philosophy), “The Really Hard Problem: Meaning in a Material World”

On these days, seminar will meet from 4-5, led by the Green College speaker, and students will then attend the lecture from 5-6:30; on some days quizzes may be held from 4-4:30, with everyone reading over to Green College after the quiz.

### Required Texts

Slingerland, Edward. 2008. *What Science Offers the Humanities: Integrating Body & Culture*. Cambridge University Press.

Wilson, David Sloan. 2007. *Evolution for Everyone*. Delacourt Press.

### Course requirements and weightings for final grade:

*Seminar Participation:* You will be expected to attend seminar regularly, arriving on time and having read and thought about the assigned readings for that day.

*Quizzes:* Approximately every other week a pop quiz will be given covering all the material since the previous quiz, or the beginning of the semester in the case of the first quiz. In

determining your final quiz grade we will take only your top five quiz grades from a total of six quizzes. If you miss a quiz for any reason (any reason) you will receive a zero, but this won't be counted unless you miss more than one quiz. Since feedback will be immediate, no make-up quizzes can ever be given. Quizzes will be a mix of multiple choice and short answers.

*Papers* There will be two paper assignments over the course of the semester, each 10-12 pages (double-spaced, Times New Roman 12 pt, 1-inch margins).

*Final Exam:* The final examination is cumulative over the entire semester and covers all the readings and seminar discussions. The structure of the final exam will mirror the quizzes. Students must be available for the final examination, so do not schedule your departure until after our final. Check the registrar for the date.

	Percentage contribution
Seminar Participation	15%
Quizzes	25%
Papers	40%
Final Exam	20%

Schedule

Class #	Date	Topics
1	Jan 4	<p><b><u>Welcome to The Faculty of Arts</u></b></p> <p>Introduction to the different approaches, methodologies, and assumptions that prevail in the various humanities disciplines today.</p> <p><i>Incompatible approaches to human characterize the academy</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Standard Social Scientific Model: Traditions in Anthropology, History, and Area Studies.</li> <li>• The Rational Choice Model: Methodological individualism and the Selfishness Axiom in Economics and Political Science.</li> <li>• It's all in your head or let a thousand flowers bloom: How psychologists think about thinking.</li> <li>• The intellectual epidemic: problems with postmodernism</li> <li>• What's a good method? What counts as "data"? It would seem that depends on what discipline you are in.</li> </ul> <p>Reading: Slingerland 2008: Chapter 2 (optional)</p>
2	Jan 11	<p><b><u>An Evolutionary Approach</u></b></p> <p><i>How can we clean up this confusion? Can evolution provide a unifying framework to link divergent disciplines, answer the 'why questions', and provide a broad overarching framework for coupling up to emergent processes and complex structures?</i></p> <p><i>What is Evolutionary Theory, and What is it Not?</i></p> <p>Guest seminar leader: Gregory Bole (Zoology, UBC)</p> <p>Reading: Wilson, Chs 1-10</p> <p><i>Understanding evolution and applying it to humans</i></p> <p>Reading: Slingerland 2008: Introduction</p>
3	Jan 18	<p><b><u>The Embodied Mind</u></b></p> <p><i>Embodiment and meaning: How does meaning arise out of embodied experience? How does the pre-structure of our embodied minds constrain cognition?</i></p> <p>Guest seminar leader: Mark Johnson (U Oregon, Philosophy)</p> <p>Reading: Slingerland Chapter 3; VISTA: selections from Mark Johnson, <i>The Meaning of the Body</i></p>

4	Jan 25	<p><b><u>Moral Psychology, Emotions and Reason</u></b></p> <p><i>Emotions and reasoning from Plato to today</i>  Reading: VISTA: Jonathan Haidt, “The new synthesis in moral psychology”</p> <p><i>Understanding Emotions as adaptations</i>  Reading: VISTA: Randolph Nesse (TBA)  Reading: Wilson, Ch. 23</p>
5	Feb 1	<p><b><u>Philosophical Avenues</u></b></p> <p><i>The cognitive science of consciousness</i>  Guest seminar leader: Eric Margolis  Reading: <i>Introducing Consciousness</i> (Vista)</p> <p><i>Bringing together cognitive science and philosophy</i>  Reading: Slingerland 2008: Chapter 1, pp. 31-62; Chapter 6, pp. 250-278</p> <p><b>Paper #1 assigned (due Friday, March 5, 4 p.m.)</b></p>
6	Feb 8	<p><b><u>The Origins of Art</u></b></p> <p><i>Where does art come from? Why do humans engage in art?</i>  Guest seminar leader: Ellen Dissanayake (U. Washington, Art History)</p> <p>Reading: VISTA: Dissanayake, “What is Art?”  Reading: Wilson, Chapters 16, 24</p> <p>Prestige, signaling and the evolution of the arts  Reading: VISTA: Henrich and Gil-White</p>
7	March 1	<p><b><u>Building a theory of culture on evolutionary foundations</u></b></p> <p><i>How can culture emerge from evolutionary theory?</i>  Reading: VISTA: Henrich &amp; McElreath (2006)  Reading: Wilson, Chs. 11-15, 17-20</p> <p><i>How culture affects our psychology</i>  Guest seminar leader: Steve Heine (social psychology)</p> <p>Reading: Vista: Heine, “Cultural Psychology”</p> <p><b>Paper #1 due Friday March 5<sup>th</sup>.</b></p> <p>[TR]</p>
8	March 8	<p><b><u>Literature, Creativity and Cultural Diversity</u></b></p> <p><i>Conceptual Blending, Literature and Human Creativity</i></p>

		<p>Guest seminar leader: Mark Turner (Cognitive Science, Case Western)  Reading: VISTA: “The Scope of Human Thought,” “The Origin of Selkies”</p> <p><i>Blending and Cultural Diversity</i>  Reading: Slingerland 2008: Chapter Four</p> <p><b>Quiz #3 [T] at beginning of class (covering weeks 6, 7, and reading for week 8), then off to Green College for Turner talk</b></p> <p>[JR]</p>
8	March 15	<p><b><u>Origins and Nature of cooperation, altruism and ethics</u></b></p> <p><i>What is the nature of altruism? Kinship, reciprocity and reputation</i></p> <p>Reading: VISTA: Henrich and Henrich, Chapter 3, 5, and 6.  Wilson: Chapters 21-22</p> <p>[JR]</p>
9	March 22	<p><b><u>The Emergence of Norms and Institutions</u></b></p> <p><i>Where do norms and institutions come from? Do they influence our basic motivations?</i></p> <p>Reading: Henrich &amp; Henrich (Henrich et. al. forthcoming)</p> <p><i>The debate on law and virtue in Early China</i></p> <p>VISTA: Scott Cook, ‘The Debate over Coercive Rulership and the ‘Human Way’ in light of Recently Excavated Warring States Texts’</p> <p>VISTA: Slingerland, “The Problem of Moral Spontaneity in the Guodian Corpus:</p> <p><b>Quiz #4 [J] at beginning of class (covering weeks 7, 8 and reading for 9)</b></p> <p><b>Paper #2 assigned</b></p> <p>[TR]</p>
10	March 29	<p><b><u>Evolution and Human Beings</u></b></p> <p><i>Embodiment and Free Will</i>  <i>The Problem of the Soul</i>  <i>The Bogeyman of Reductionism</i></p> <p>Guest seminar leader: Owen Flanagan (Duke, Philosophy) “The Problem of the Soul”</p> <p>Reading: Flanagan, <i>Problem of the Soul</i> (selections); Slingerland 2008: Chapter 6, pp. 278-296</p>

		<p><b>Quiz #5 [T] at beginning of class (covering week 9 and reading for week 10), then over to the Coach House for Flanagan’s talk</b></p> <p>[JR]</p>
12	April 5	<p><b>Class cancelled (Easter Monday)</b></p>
13	April 12	<p><b><u>Religion</u></b></p> <p><i>Religion, Cognition and Cooperation</i></p> <p>Guest seminar leader: Ara Norenzayan (Psychology)</p> <p>Reading: VISTA: “The origin and evolution of religious prosociality,” “Darwin’s God”</p> <p><i>The evolution of religious beliefs, rituals and institutions</i></p> <p>Reading: Wilson, Chs. 26-30</p> <p><b>Quiz #6 [J], covering week 10 and reading for 11</b></p>
	April 19	<p><b>Paper #2 due, Henrich’s mailbox in the Psychology Building (Kenny), by 4 p.m. Do not turn the paper in at Buchanan Tower.</b></p>

### **Our Position on Academic Misconduct**

Cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic misconduct are very serious concerns of the University. In all cases of suspected academic misconduct, the parties involved will be pursued to the fullest extent dictated by the guidelines of the University. Strong evidence of cheating or plagiarism may result in a zero credit for the work in question. According to the University Act (section 61), the President of UBC has the right to impose harsher penalties including (but not limited to) a failing grade for the course, suspension from the University, cancellation of scholarships, or a notation added to a student’s transcript.

All graded work in this course, unless otherwise specified, is to be original work done independently by individuals. Do **not** use Google/Yahoo/MSN Search/etc. to find articles for assignments in this course. **Do** use any of the indexes and databases listed under Indexes and Databases, Subject Resources, OneSearch or Metasearch on the Library’s website at <http://www.library.ubc.ca>. (Not sure which index to use? Click HELP on the library homepage at [www.library.ubc.ca](http://www.library.ubc.ca) or try Subject Resources.)

If you have any questions as to whether or not what you are doing is even a borderline case of academic misconduct, please consult your instructor. For details on pertinent University policies and procedures, please see Chapter 5 in the UBC Calendar (<http://students.ubc.ca/calendar>).

### **Special Accommodations:**

UBC accommodates students with disabilities who have registered with the [Disability Resource Centre \(DRC\)](#). If you have a disability that may affect your performance in this class, please make sure you have contacted the DRC to arrange for accommodations. Please let us know of these accommodations within the first two weeks of class.

UBC also accommodates students whose religious obligations conflict with attendance, assignments, or examinations. Please let us know within the first two weeks of class if you will require any accommodation on these grounds.

The university does not have any formal policy on accommodating students who plan to be absent for varsity athletics, family obligations, or other similar commitments. Please do not assume that you will get special accommodations for these sorts of absences; it is your responsibility to ensure that you meet the course requirements as scheduled. If you do plan to be absent during any time an assignment or examination is scheduled, please discuss this with us as soon as possible (and make sure you do so before the drop date.)